

it breeds in holes in cliffs and the precipitous sides of gorges and water courses. I have also found eggs or young on several occasions in deserted crows' nests, and once in a hole in the side of a small quarry; while in Sukkur district several pairs had their homes in natural holes in solid stone, great masses of rock, in the old bed of the Indus near the ruins of Aror. The nest lining which is generally very meagre, consists of a few feathers, grass stems or dry leaves.

Three to five eggs are laid, in most cases four and these as a rule are found, like most owls' eggs, in all stages of incubation, due presumably to the irregular intervals at which they are laid and the habit this owl in particular has of holing up during the day, with the result that incubation begins, intentionally or otherwise, from the time the first egg is deposited. It is not unusual to find both female and male in a nest containing eggs. On one occasion I rooted out three full grown birds and their parents, five in all, from a hole in a mango tree.

In the U.P. this bird is most appropriately named, *Khus-kut-tuttia*, and in Upper Sind I have heard Seraikis call it, also appropriately, *Chugal-chiri*. It is surely needless for me to explain why. In Sind, the name *Chibiru* is applied indiscriminately to it and all other small owls.

KARACHI,

October 26, 1938.

K. R. EATES,

F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

Indian Police.

XV.—VULTURES FEEDING AT NIGHT.

I have heard it said that vultures will occasionally feed on a carcase at night, if there is a moon; but I cannot remember having actually observed this myself, so the other night out of curiosity I went out after dinner at about 9 o'clock to visit the remains of a cow that lay on the hill side below my cottage.

The moon was about three-quarters full, but misty clouds reduced visibility. The carcase of the cow at which the vultures had been feeding on during the day time lay on the open hillside, but round it on two sides was fairly thick cover-bushes and long grass, and the ground fell away below it to pass into a bushy ravine. As there had been a leopard about recently I took a shotgun and electric torch.

Coming to the carcase I passed within twenty yards of it screened by bushes, and as I did so, I heard the vultures on the remains. They were apparently actively feeding on it as they were hissing and apparently squabbling over it. I took a half turn round it and suddenly appeared some ten yards from the carcase and flashed my torch on it—though it was hardly necessary to do so in the moonlight. There were about fifteen vultures gathered all round the body and they stretched up their heads and necks to view the intruder. They consisted of White-backed Vultures and the Northern Long-billed Vultures in about equal numbers. There

was one Black Vulture among them though three had been at the carcase during the daytime.

They then began to leave the carcase flying off downhill towards the ravine—one by one—some pitching again on the hill side nearby. But one of them a White-backed Vulture crouched—drawing his neck in and depressing his head as if trying to hide himself and refused to go. I went right up to him and poked him with the muzzle of my gun! He then made a short flop of a few yards down the hill where I left him in the grass. It is possible that he was injured in a fight with the others or with a piedog during the daytime.

What would a leopard have done had he come to this 'kill'? Do leopards and tigers ever kill vultures in order to eat them? I have seen a tiger in the daytime spring up from his 'kill' and jump up at the vultures but he did not get one. That was apparently only to drive the vultures off.

On the other hand I shot a leopard who was in the habit of climbing the big Banyan trees to eat the young vultures in the nests! Was that an exceptional depravity—or is it not unusual?

I am now of the opinion that vultures will feed by moonlight if they are not afraid to come to ground at the carcase. That we never see them do so when waiting up for tigers and leopards is no doubt from their fear of the big cats and other night prowlers.

Many interesting questions arise from this observation. What species of vultures are given to feeding by moonlight? How much moon must there be to tempt them down? Do they feed ever when there is no moon? It should be possible to test their sight by night at any Zoo where they are held captive . . . and also their sense of smell . . . has that ever been investigated?

TAUNGGYI, S.S.S.

T. R. LIVESEY.

BURMA.

October 4, 1938.

XVI.—THE STATUS AND NIDIFICATION OF THE PERSIAN BEE-EATER (*MEROPS PERSICUS PERSICUS* PALL.) IN SIND.

The Persian, or rather Iranian Bee-eater is an early summer migrant to Sind, where it breeds in suitable localities, freely in some places, sparingly in others.

Thousands of birds enter the Province yearly, numbers remain to breed, others pass on into Rajputana, which so far as I am aware is the limit of its extension east.

The route through Sind embraces the whole Province, from Kashmor in the north, to Karachi in the south. The general direction of migrating birds is always towards the east and birds any distance away from their regular breeding haunts fly very high, except when feeding.

Birds as a rule begin to arrive in Sind in late April or early